

COMMISSION ON AGING AND RETIREMENT EDUCATION

Senior MOMENTUM



VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1

Helping Older Adults Live Better in Baltimore... One day at a Time!

FEBRUARY 2006

Director's message



John P. Stewart
Executive Director

Greetings,

Muhammad Ali said, "Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth." As we commemorate Black History month in Baltimore, let us keep in mind those great African Americans who dedicated their lives and amassed enough capital here on earth to build a city. People like

Rosa Parks, Shirley Chisholm, Ossie Davis, Johnnie Cochran, John Johnson, and a host of others have left rich legacies that will continue to influence young and old alike in their quest to give back to the community.

In Baltimore, a city burgeoning with its own history and legacies, we have many local heroes past and present who continue to add threads to the tapestry of African American culture and enrich the quality of life for our citizens. I would like to talk about the incredible gifts of one in particular, Ms. Gwendolyn Johnson, a CARE employee, Commissioner, and legal advocate affectionately known as the "Mayor of Cherry Hill."

Gwen was born in 1924 in Bolton Hill. Her mother and father were domestic servants for a private home; he was the cook and her mother was the maid. They saved their money and moved to East Baltimore where she was raised in the 1700 block of Chase Street. Gwen was a product of the Baltimore City Schools and graduated from Dunbar Junior High in 1940. Gwen's family moved to New York where she graduated from Wadley High School in 1944 and started her career as the first black waitress at Long Champs Restaurant in Lower Manhattan, New York City.

In the mid-40's and early 50's, Ms. Johnson returned to Baltimore to raise her child and became involved in politics after a gentleman named Mr. Edwards, who worked in the Domino Sugar Refinery, was accused of killing a white woman while chasing her car by foot in Baltimore County. Though her advocacy did not change his sentence, it did save Mr. Edwards from hanging.

After this incident, her connection to politics continued by participating in the Progressive Party with Paul Robeson, Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., W. E. B. Dubois and Robeson's wife, Orlanda. Gwen was once asked by Orlanda Robeson, "Who are you and where did you come from?" Ms. Johnson retorted, "I'm a poor black woman who has come to this meeting by car over two days to fight for all poor black people. I'm here to speak up and not take anyone's abuse, including yours."

Tel-Life – Low Cost Phone Service

A very small percent of Baltimore City residents take advantage of a low-cost discount phone service offered by Verizon. The program is called Tel-Life and it is estimated that only 3 to 5 percent of qualified individuals in the city currently benefit from the telephone savings. This service would be extremely helpful to seniors on low and fixed incomes.

A number of discounts are offered through Tel-Life. The \$3.50 a month Federal Subscriber Line Charge is eliminated and the first 30 calls are included in the monthly charge of \$.66. If more than 30 calls are made monthly, the subscriber is billed at 8 1/2 cents per call. In addition, subscribers are only required to pay one half of the line connection charge. This alone is a savings of \$24.00. Tel-Life members are also exempt from paying the telecommunication tax.

Anyone in Maryland who receives Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), Transitional Emergency Medical and Housing Assistance Program Bene-

fits (TEMHAP), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or Public Assistance to Adults (PAA) is eligible for the Tel-Life discount.

If a subscriber currently has a phone service with Verizon, there is no charge to change to Tel-Life. If a subscriber does not have service with Verizon, the most he will have to pay for this service is \$24.00. This amount can be spread out over six months at \$4.00 per month. If a subscriber needs phone wiring or to have jacks installed, the subscriber will be charged only one half of the regular charge for the wire and one outlet.

An application to determine eligibility must be mailed to the State of Maryland, Department of Human Services (DHR), Tel-Life Unit, 311 West Saratoga Street, Baltimore MD 21201. DHR will determine eligibility and send the application to Verizon. The process takes about 30 days.

To learn more about Tel-Life and aging services in Baltimore, contact the Commission on Aging and Retirement Education (CARE) at 410-396-2273.



CARE Commissioner Gwendolyn Johnson and Executive Director John P. Stewart

Her advocacy for poor black workers became a fixture when she became the first black waitress in downtown Baltimore. "I would hold my ground with anyone who tried to deny me my rights, or the respect I was due." This was also the point where Ms. Johnson became a hostess for the civic group, The Blue Ribbon Committee, which held fundraisers to send kids to fresh air camps. "On a good day, we were able to raise an average of \$400 for the kids."

Gwen moved to Cherry Hill in 1968 and continued her activism with a primary focus on children. By 1972, she added four adopted children to her family. In 1973, she started the Cherry Hill Eating Together Program at the urging of then-assistant Health Commissioner, Paul Morris. This spearheaded her involvement with CARE. She served as a nutrition aide from 1974 until 1989, all along advocating for seniors to get benefits that were due them.

She was appointed to the State Central Committee of the Democratic Party in 1974 and ran successful campaigns to keep that post until she left office in 1994. During her tenure with the party, she petitioned Senator Harry McGirke for more representation of Cherry Hill

within the party. The delegates went from one to five, and it stands till this day.

Ms. Johnson's service and advocacy did not stop there. For more than 30 years she has served in community leadership positions, including Commissioner of the Human Services Committee, vice president of the Legal Aid Bureau Board of Directors, and member of the University of Maryland Farmer Mitchell Advisory Board, among others.

Having been with CARE since 1973 in several capacities, she now serves as CARE Commissioner. A grandmother of six, a great grandmother of seven, and a Den mother to the Cub Scouts, Commissioner Gwen Johnson exemplifies the same selflessness that was displayed by Rosa Parks on that fateful day in Montgomery, Alabama. Without Gwen Johnson, we would still be living in a time and place that was not very friendly or very forgiving.

We all have gifts to offer. They don't come in packages with bright colored ribbons and bows, but from deep and complex places within our heart; just like Rosa Parks and Gwen Johnson. Pay it forward this New Year by volunteering and giving your services to others. Continue the rich legacy of service that is the benchmark of American life. Uphold the values and sacrifices that were made by the likes of Rosa Parks and Ms. Johnson, in paying your rent for your room here on earth. By the advocacy and service we give, we make the many rooms into a home for all to dwell in peace, love and happiness.

Celebrate Black History month by reading and sharing your stories with those who will be left behind and who will carry on the works of great Americans.

John P. Stewart

John P. Stewart

The National Family Caregiver Support Program

The National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP) was enacted as a part of the Older Americans Act Amendments of 2000. The program calls for all states - working in partnership with Area Agencies on Aging and local community-service providers - to have five basic services for family caregivers. These services include:

- Information to caregivers about available services
- Assistance to caregivers in gaining access to services
- Individual counseling, organization of support groups, and caregiver training to caregivers in making decisions and solving problems relating to their caregiving roles
- Respite care to enable caregivers to be temporarily relieved from their caregiving responsibilities
- Supplemental services, on a limited basis, to complement the care provided by caregivers.

A \$500 grant is awarded to eligible family caregivers to provide assistance with emergency or special needs. Those eligible for the grants include family caregivers of older adults and grandparents, as well as relative caregivers, age 60 or older, of children no older than age 18 (including grandparents who are the sole caregivers of grandchildren and those individuals who are affected by mental retardation or who have developmental disabilities). The statute requires priority consideration to persons in greatest social and economic need (with particular attention to low-income individuals) and older individuals providing care and support to persons with mental retardation and related developmental disabilities.

CARE's NFCSP is in the process of developing a Caregiver Training Program. This training program will focus on training family caregivers as well as volunteers. The training program will offer high quality hands-on training in essential care skills from a trained professional in the medical field. The 18-hour course will be divided into 9 to 12 sessions. The course will cover topics related to caregiving, such as fire safety, fall prevention, personal care, how to manage medication, how to care for someone on bed rest, and infection control. More topics will be introduced to the program as the program develops. The training course will also be available in Spanish. For more information on this program, call 410-396-1337.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February events

3rd • 12:15 p.m. to 1:15 p.m.

Hear personal stories from Buffalo Soldiers - the first such units chartered in peacetime. Featuring Trooper Martin Cruise & Trooper Arthur Talbart. (FREE) Mason Lord Room/Waxter Center.

6th+

Beginning on February 6, every Monday throughout the Tax Season, Assistance filling out your tax forms with AARP representative Claire Hale. Hatton Senior Center. *Call for your appointment: 410-396-9025*



6th+ • 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

French - Starting February 6, every Monday thru April 17. Cost: \$30. Contact the Senior Network of North Baltimore 410-323-7131

7th+ • 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon

Advanced French - Starting February 7, every Tuesday through March 28. Cost: \$50. Contact the Senior Network of North Baltimore 410-323-7131

7th • 12:15 p.m. to 1:15 p.m.

"Past, Present and Future" - Journey Through a Moment In African American History Speaker: Edna Lawrence, historian. (FREE) Mason Lord Room/Waxter Center 410-396-1324

9th • 12:15 p.m. to 1:15 p.m.

BGE "Save Energy, Save Money" Learn about state and federal programs that can provide financial assistance with your utility bill. Speaker: Shelly Wortham, energy educator. (FREE) Mason Lord Room/Waxter Center 410-396-1324

14th • 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon



University of Maryland Medical Center & Maryland General Hospital "Heart Smart Day" - A Valentine's Day filled with heart healthy tips, screenings and fun, cholesterol and blood sugar testing, vascular screening,

Ask a doctor/pharmacist, blood pressure screenings and heart healthy lunch. (FREE) Mason Lord Room/Waxter Center 410-396-1324

15th •

Bus Trip to Lorenzo's Dinner Theater Musical Legends - from Hatton Senior Center 410-396-9025

21st • 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Reginald Lewis Museum & The Blacks In Wax Museum Cost: \$25. Senior Network of North Baltimore 410-323-7131

27th • 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

How to Manage Change in Your Life. Hatton Senior Center 410-396-9025

March events

7th • 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Historic Churches of Annapolis. Cost: \$45. Senior Network of North Baltimore 410-323-7131

13th •

Bus Trip to Midway. Contact Hatton Senior Center 410-396-9025

15th •



National Aquarium with lunch at McCormick and Schmick's. Hatton Senior Center 410-396-9025

Trips

March 19th-25th

The Golden Isles of Georgia

Cost: \$549.00 p/p double occupancy 7 days & 6 nights. Trip includes: 6 nights' lodging, 6 breakfasts, 4 full course dinners, Jekyll Island Tram Tour, admission to three historic Jekyll Island Homes, guided tour of St. Simons Island, Jekyll Island & Savannah, Millionaires Village Tram Tour, and much more. Senior Network of North Baltimore 410-323-7131



September 17th-21st

New Hampshire Lakes & Mountains Tour

Cost: \$554 Double p/p. 5 Days 4 Nights. Trip includes: 11 meals, deluxe accommodations, Castle In the Clouds Tour & Wolfeboro Inn Lunch, Pewter Company Tour, railroad ride with picnic lunch on board, and much more. Senior Network of North Baltimore 410-323-7131